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THE WAR AND A GREATER SCANDINAVIA

BY JULIUS MORITZEN

CALL it by whatever name—understanding, *entente*, alliance—the effect of the Malmö conference between the rulers of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden must be that of a united Scandinavia; the dawning of a new and greater political era in the Northland.

When the war broke out the Scandinavian countries were enjoying commercial prosperity, with England and Germany among the best customers. For years Denmark and the southern neighbor had drawn closer. The disastrous event which resulted in the loss of Schleswig-Holstein may not have been entirely forgotten, but, at any rate, the Danes were not hankering after *ravanche*. The Radical party in control of the Government at Copenhagen was looking for internal progress rather than international issues. In a cultural direction Germany and Denmark found in either country much that proved of great value. The fact that Christian X. had for his consort a princess from Mecklenburg-Schwerin may or may not have had something to do with the good relations that obtained between Berlin and the Danish capital.

With England, Denmark has for decades maintained the very closest association. Ever since the Danish princess won the esteem of the British nation—first as the wife of the Prince of Wales and subsequently as the Queen of England—Alexandra became the strong link in the chain that gave international stability to the little Northern land. There is no denying the fact that Denmark found security in those royal matches which good Queen Louise arranged between her daughters and the scions of Great Britain and Russia. It is probably true that as Empress of all the Russias Dagmar yielded a considerable mastery over Alexander, and that this daughter of Scandinavia let no opportunity go by for aiding the country of her nativity.

Wedge in, as it were, between the North Sea and the Baltic, Denmark had no reason to doubt that with powerful neighbors to the left and right as friends, Danish soil would be kept inviolate. In addition, England had come to look upon the Danes as their purveyors of foodstuffs. Danish butter and bacon and eggs found ready markets in the British Isles, while the savings-banks of Denmark piled up deposits in consequence.

The situation in Sweden at the time hostilities began was somewhat different to that of Denmark. Political issues were engrossing the people. King Gustaf, strenuously laboring for army and navy increases, found himself confronted by an opposing Congress. The Socialist party brought to bear all its power in an endeavor to defeat the military programme of the King. Then came the great surprise when fifty thousand farmers gathered in Stockholm and amidst the greatest enthusiasm declared that the defense of Swedish territory was the first consideration of the nation. National solidarity became at once a fact. Political adversaries joined in a coalition to conform with the military needs as expounded by King Gustaf. The Cabinet change was such as to fit the situation. Scarcely had the country begun to work out its national defense programme when the cloud burst over Europe and nations heretofore at peace plunged headlong into a maelstrom of warfare such as the world had come to believe could never be.

Sweden, like Denmark and Norway, immediately announced a strict neutrality. When the war broke out, however, there was nothing to show that the three Scandinavian countries were working along identical lines. It is to be remembered that the Norwegians had, scarcely ten years before, declared their independence of Sweden, and that their new freedom had not yet reconciled the Swedish people to what the latter considered a territorial loss. As Crown Prince, Gustaf had been foremost in his resistance to Norway becoming independent. Had it not been for the restraining hand of Oscar II. there would have been war between the brother nations. Feeling ran high in Sweden, but the Norwegians were determined to be free. Common sense finally ruled the day, and as a result of the truce there has gradually developed what now is seen to bind the three Scandinavian countries into a unit with which Europe may yet have to reckon when the war is over and readjustment will call for justice toward the lesser nations.

That it was Gustaf V. who asked his fellow-monarchs of the

North to meet with him at Malmö for the discussion of affairs growing out of the war is of no particular consequence. Either of the other rulers might have extended the invitation, for it was a matter of common interest to all. The situation had become such that, short of trespassing upon the territories of Denmark, Sweden, and Norway, the nations responsible for the stoppage of Scandinavian sea traffic were doing the greatest possible harm to Northern activity. Everywhere in the Baltic and in the North Sea the one-time free-to-all waters were no longer because of mines. Former sea routes were no longer practicable. Embargo followed embargo, and ships flying the flags of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden were searched and taken to belligerent ports. To nations whose very existence depends on trade beyond their borders such conditions were unbearable. It may be taken for granted that Copenhagen, Christiania, and Stockholm exchanged numerous messages during the five months that preceded the Malmö conference. Each country wanted to be sure of its case; the nations at war could have their own grievances to settle, but Scandinavia desired to retain the friendship of them all, and help them, if possible, to make peace among themselves.

It has been no secret in Europe that Sweden has viewed with suspicion the Russification of Finland. King Gustaf has openly declared that to the east lay the danger to Swedish nationality. It was Russia he meant when he asked for increased armament to guard against surprises. Sven Hedin's campaign was for the identical purpose. Always it was the Russian bear who stood ready to enfold the country to the west, that it might drink of those warmer waters denied it in every other direction. With the Swedish people this danger became little short of an obsession. Whether rightly so or not, the fact is that Finland's loss of nationality under Russian domination sent a shudder from the arctic circle to the Baltic on the south.

After the conference at Malmö, Russia was first among the great Powers to discuss the effect of a Scandinavian union. The inspired press declared that it could mean nothing derogatory to the Russian people. Be that as it may, not a nation in Europe but will watch with interest the new *entente* of the North. Let it be recalled that when Queen Margarethe, in 1397, summoned the clergy and nobility of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden to the assembly at Calmar, the celebrated Union of Calmar which resulted from that memorable gathering became a potent bulwark for the security of the three countries for more

than a century. Presenting a compact and united front, the three nations of the Northern peninsula were for a long time the arbiters of the European political system. No such effect, of course, is expected as a result of the Malmö meeting, yet there is some reason for the Scandinavians to paraphrase the "Te Deum" sung in the churches of Calmar as Erik of Pomerania was anointed and crowned by the archbishops of Upsala and Lund as King of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden: "*Hæcce unio esto perpetua! Longe, longe, longe, vivai Margarethe, regina Daniae, Norvegiae et Sueciae!*"

An alliance between the Scandinavian countries has often been considered, but fear of offending the great Powers has in the past prevented its materialization. It is a curious thing that after the union of the three kingdoms of the North Queen Margarethe aimed all her efforts at regaining the duchy of Schleswig, which circumstances had compelled her to resign to Gerhard IV., Count of Holstein. It will thus be seen that the Schleswig-Holstein question was a mooted point as far back as the fifteenth century, when the interrelated affairs of Denmark and Germany were matters of the greatest concern to the peace of Europe. Again and again Sweden and Norway have stood ready to assist the Danes in retaining possession of what they consider integral parts of their land. Yet always there has been something to prevent the consummation of a plan that would have seen the three Scandinavian peoples united. The world war evidently has proved the need of openly announcing that henceforth Denmark, Sweden, and Norway will speak as if with one voice on affairs in which all three nations are interested.

The official statement issued after the Malmö conference may prove a historic document of the utmost value to Europe, and in order to understand why this may be so it is necessary to read between the lines. Wallenberg, the Swedish Minister of Foreign Affairs, said in a subsequent interview that the meeting would be of great benefit to all concerned. *Morgenbladet*, one of the leading newspapers of Christiania, declared that the present situation has taught the people of the Northern countries that their interests are identical, and that the connection between them is closer than that between any other group of nations.

Another important newspaper, the *Tidens Tegn*, said:

We want peace, but we know that peace cannot be assured without the unity of all the countries.

Alone the Scandinavian countries might yield to pressure. Together the three countries represent a strength, both military and economic, which no Power can threaten.

Much as the people of Scandinavia desire to observe strict neutrality, it is really remarkable that neither Denmark, Norway, nor Sweden has so far yielded to persuasion of a contrary sort. None of the belligerent Powers has been guiltless in making undue advances. Emissaries have aimed at convincing the neutrals that their neutrality was no protection. Newspapers of the warring Powers have done the latter a poor service by hinting that Scandinavia had better cast its lot with this or that group. On the other hand, so long as leading men in the North continue to advocate any other policy but that of the respective Governments, so long will there be suspicion that Scandinavian neutrality is but a matter of present convenience. Sven Hedin, returning from his visit with the German General Staff in France, cannot serve Sweden by lauding the Teutons as against the Allies. Björn Björnson, with his news bureau on the Continent, ought not to give his reports a too Germanic coloring, as cautioned by Politiken, of Copenhagen. Let be that Professor Fahlbeck, the distinguished Swedish scholar and former member of the Upper House, affirms that the war could have been avoided had a thoroughly armed Sweden stood at the side of Germany as a warning to Russia. The highest patriotism may be moving these men to speak as they think, yet this is not the time to aggravate a situation serious enough without threatening an extension of the war zone to Scandinavian soil.

As coming from without, Professor William Oswald's mission to Sweden in the interest of a Baltic Union cannot have added to the comfort of Scandinavia. The German Nobel prize winner was undoubtedly actuated by motives of the most pacific intent. Yet there could have been no need for informing the Swedish people where their particular interests were to be found, and as for promising a united Scandinavia that Finland might be added—that would seem to be reckoning without Russia in the premises. From Petrograd comes the version that it was because of the attempt of coercing Sweden into the German camp that the Malmö meeting was arranged as a counter-blast. This report, however, need not be taken seriously, since, no matter what may be the grievances of Sweden toward Germany for the moment, there is always Finland to warn that the Russian bear is creeping closer and closer to the Swedish border. Swedish shipping has been subjected to much annoyance in the

Baltic, due to Germany's embargo, but when the Swedes look toward the North Sea they find another of the belligerents no less vigilant lest contraband get into the enemy's country by way of ships flying the flag of Sweden. It is, of course, for the purpose of asserting their rights that the three Northern nations have agreed on concerted action, and none of the other neutral countries applauds Scandinavia's stand more certainly than does Italy, where newspapers like *Vita*, the organ of the Radicals, and *Tribuna*, commenting on the Malmö conference, declare that the Northland has set an example of the greatest value to the world. There is not the slightest doubt that, acting as a unit, Scandinavia will argue its shipping case with greater hope for success than if Denmark, Norway, and Sweden had gone separately before the nations responsible for the halt to traffic. From the beginning of the war until the middle of December the total losses to Scandinavian shipping through mine disasters alone were seventy-two lives and twenty-two ships containing cargoes valued at \$10,000,000. The embargo, of course, is an item impossible to figure out until long in the future, but that the loss through contraband search will run into the millions is a foregone conclusion.

Exposed as Norway is to the North Sea, on its western border, that country has found itself in a most uncomfortable position since the outbreak of the war. At any time a great naval battle might take place within earshot of the Norwegian coast. That would be the hour for testing Norway's neutrality, and also its ability to defend this neutrality. Unlike either Sweden or Denmark, however, Norway has neither fear of an immediate neighbor nor the recollection of a disastrous defeat that, as in the case of the Danes, cost them a valued territory. It is true, perhaps, that, owing to geographical conditions, Sweden's interests are now as closely knit with Norway's as when the brother nations had a ruler in common. There is no doubt, furthermore, that where for so many years the Finnish problem has remained unsolved, all the people in the Scandinavian peninsula have become steeped in the idea that Russia will not stop until it obtains those ice-free harbors that the empire considers essential to its existence as an empire. When men of the character of Fridtjof Nansen, Dr. Sigurd Ibsen, and Björn Björnson persist in declaring that the menace to Norway is immediately beyond the Swedish border, there is reason to feel that the people will look apprehensively at the Czar's legions.

And yet, in speaking of the importance of the Malmö conference, Hr. Ihlen, the Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs, declared emphatically that his country was paying no heed to all the efforts that had been made to persuade Norway that Russia had designs on her national integrity as well as that of Sweden. In fact, Hr. Ihlen said that in recent months the Norwegians had had many proofs that the Russian Government was most amicably inclined toward the whole of Scandinavia. The Swedish Minister of Foreign Affairs voiced a similar sentiment, affirming further that much of the uneasiness regarding Russia's intention was passing away as a result of the powerful neighbor's evident effort to usher in a new international epoch in Scandinavia.

If, then, the neighboring nations of Russia accept the assurance that their neutrality shall be respected now and in the future, there should be no cause for inquiring as to the reason why there has been such a change of front. The great catastrophe of to-day will make a material difference in the relations of the powers to the lesser countries. Denmark, Norway, and Sweden may even prove instrumental in making international adjustment easier because of the fact that Scandinavia is so thoroughly in earnest regarding its neutral attitude toward all the warring countries.

That the Norwegian press should have made the suggestion that Gustaf of Sweden is entitled to the Nobel Peace Prize for his initiative in establishing the Scandinavian triple *entente* must be conclusive evidence that all friction between the two countries has passed away. It is recalled also at this time that in the cause of Northern harmony no men worked more unceasingly than Oscar II. and that great Norwegian commoner Björnstjerne Björnson. The King and the poet did not always agree on questions that concerned the political alignment between Norway and Sweden. But that Scandinavia should make common cause, both men declared. The year 1905 arrived with its separation crisis, but the severance of the nations in reality led to the harmony which exists to-day.

That greater Scandinavia which may be considered a concrete fact already cannot record the events which led to the Malmö meeting without taking account of Nicholas II.'s peace rescript, however much out of harmony that incident in Russia's history appears when viewed in the light of the present. When W. T. Stead made his noteworthy tour of the courts of Europe to learn how the various nations felt about the Czar's

summons, he met in Rome Björnstjerne Björnson. Asked his opinion regarding the peace rescript of the Russian Emperor, Björnson replied by asserting that the small countries should now combine politically so as to present a solid front before the Powers. The germ of Mr. Stead's desired United States of Europe reposed in that proposal of the Norwegian, since Björnson insisted that Belgium and Holland and Switzerland should be members with the Scandinavian countries of this league of minor States.

And now Denmark and Norway and Sweden stand a unit for the preservation of their own independence and the safeguarding of the neutral principle. The war may go on; still one section of Europe will hardly undergo a geographical change when the conflict comes to an end. The belligerents will find a way to respect a neutrality that may be considered the one bright spot on the somber European canvas. In that direction Scandinavia may extend hands across the sea, for while the citizens of the United States, like those of Denmark, Sweden, and Norway, have a right to their opinions, and are privileged to place their sympathies where they wish, no Governments more so than the North American Republic and the three Northern nations of Europe are aiming to make neutrality effective, for their own sake, as well as for the purpose of saving some parts of the world from the devastating war that most likely will be the last permitted by an outraged civilization.

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